

PLAZA HOTEL
230 North Plaza
Las Vegas
San Miguel County
New Mexico

HABS NM-206
NM-206

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

ADDENDUM TO:
PLAZA HOTEL
230 North Plaza
Las Vegas
County
New Mexico

HABS NM-206
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Addendum to PLAZA HOTEL

HABS No. NM-206

Location: 230 North Plaza, Las Vegas, San Miguel County, New Mexico.

The hotel is located within the Plaza Historic District and is included as a contributing structure in the “Historic Resources of Las Vegas, New Mexico” inventory for the National Register of Historic Places (1984).

Significance: Built in 1882, the Plaza Hotel embodied the ambitions of local businessmen, led by Benigno Romero, to create the finest hotel in the territory. Romero and his compatriots formed the Las Vegas Hotel and Improvement Company in 1880 with the express purpose of erecting a hotel that would not only house visitors coming to town via the railroad but also would serve as an expression of themselves and their community. Well known guests include silent film producer Romaine Fielding in 1913-14 and the 1960s-era political faction called the Mama Lucy Gang. Today the hotel is owned by Plaza Partnership, Ltd., and its restoration sparked interest in the preservation of the historic town center.¹

History:² Present-day Las Vegas, New Mexico, has its antecedents in a land grant from the Mexican government to twenty-nine families in 1835. Together they were to establish an independent, farming village and thereby further settlement in the valleys east of the Sangre de Cristo mountains. Indeed, Las Vegas resembled a self-sufficient, agricultural community until the American Civil War. The town center was a rectangular plaza; low, one-story adobe buildings with flat roofs dotted its periphery. South of the plaza a residential neighborhood formed in the 1850s; another was located to the northwest of the plaza. The plaza, however, retained its commercial, religious, and civic functions. Spatial relationships between the buildings and their site, streets, and each other reflected the prevalence of Hispanic traditions in this early period.

After the American and Mexican war in 1846-48, settlers and supplies from Fort Union altered the character of Las Vegas, importing Anglo-American tastes and building materials. Architecturally this brought hipped and gable roofed structures to the landscape, as well as those made of stone and brick masonry and those made of wood. Aesthetically builders adapted the Greek Revival, creating what is known as the Territorial Style of architecture.

¹“Plaza Hotel,” *Historic Las Vegas, New Mexico: Along the Santa Fe Trail* (Las Vegas: Citizens’ Committee for Historic Preservation, 2004).

²The historical information is a compilation from the State and National Register files.

The first commercial buildings were erected on the plaza; ranchers and traders came to town and their business cemented Las Vegas's place as a mercantile center from the 1840s onward. Its location on the Santa Fe trail further augmented this role. The railroad arrived in 1879, although its depot was located across the river from the plaza. The depot provided a second locus for growth in the city; the plaza remained its center, and was the site of the best examples of late nineteenth-century Italianate-style commercial structures. Examples included the Plaza Hotel.

Between 1882, once it was complete, and up until 1915, the Plaza Hotel was the city's premier hotel despite competition by the luxurious Castaneda Hotel erected in 1899. The Plaza hosted businessmen and ranchers. It also served as a successful commercial hotel, accommodating business meetings, banquets, and dances, along with the overnight guest.³

Description: The three-story, brick masonry hotel building is characterized by an ornamental facade and parapet capped by a broken pediment, a feature in turn flanked by urns. The cornice is made of pressed metal and terminates in brackets. Beneath the pediment and cornice, letters spell out the words, "Plaza Hotel." The third-floor windows are glazed with one-over-one lights; the sills are made of sandstone and end in ears. These windows are topped by bracketed pediments, also made of sandstone. On the second floor, the one-over-one glazed windows are capped by segmental arched hoods, also bracketed and made of sandstone. At ground level, fenestration consists of doors and windows glazed with two-over-two lights. There are cast-iron columns on the first floor, with quoins at the second- and third-floor levels.

Sources:

Diana G. Stein, "The Plaza Hotel," New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties, State Planning Office, 1977. The form references an accompanying historical sketch and list of sources by Dr. Lynn I. Perrigo, although those documents were not included in the file copy reviewed for this report.

Chris Wilson, "Nuestra Senora de Los Dolores de Las Vegas (City of Los Vegas)," Nomination, National Register of Historic Places, 1984.

³ Diana G. Stein, "The Plaza Hotel," New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties, State Planning Office, 1977.